

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 09084 171247Z

42

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SUBJ: VIGNES' PRESS CONFERENCE STRESSES MALVINAS AND MFM

1. FOLLOWING A DEC 14 MEETING WITH MRS. PERON TO BRIEF HER ON THE RESULTS OF THE LIMA MEETING CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF AYACUCHO, FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES HELD A SHORT NEWS CONFERENCE. THE KEY POINTS MADE BY VIGNES WERE THE FOLLOWING: A) CUBA AT MFM. ASKED BY NEWSMEN WHAT EFFECT THE QUITO MEETING WOULD HAVE ON CUBAN PRESENCE IN BUENOS AIRES, VIGNES REPLIED, "THE APPARENT FAILURE OF THE QUITO MEETING TO RESOLVE THE CUBAN SANCTIONS ISSUE WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON HOW WE PROCEED WITH THE MARCH MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS. AS THE HOST COUNTRY, IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONSULT THE HEMISPHERE NATIONS WITH RESPECT TO INVITING CUBA. THESE CONSULTATIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN COMPLETED." B) THE MALVINAS. ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE MALVINAS (FALKLAND ISLANDS), VIGNES SAID, "THERE ARE TWO WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN RECOVER THE ISLANDS--BY INVADING THEM OR NEGOTIATING FOR THEIR RETURN". WHILE VIGNES ADDED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE STILL GOING ON, THE REFERENCE TO INVASION GRABBED THE HEADLINES. THIS STATEMENT HAS PROVOKED SPECULATION IN PRESS THAT GOA IS LOSING PATIENCE WITH PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS AND IS PREPARING TO TAKE A MORE HARD-LINE STAND. INDEED, SUNDAYS

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 09084 171247Z

LA OPINION CARRIED ARTICLE BYLINED BY HERIBERTO KAHN, IN

WHICH KAHN SPECULATES THAT RECENT ASSIGNMENTS OF SENIOR NAVAL OFFICERS MAY BE RELATED TO GOA'S HARDENING ATTITUDE ON MALVINAS.

2. COMMENT: VIGNES COMMENTS RE CUBA CONTINUE TO REFLECT LOW KEY MEASURED TONE HE HAS ADOPTED WITH RESPECT TO THIS ISSUE SINCE WASHINGTON MFM. HIS COMMENT ON THE MALVINAS IS MORE PROVOCATIVE THAN ANY HE HAS MADE TO DATE, THOUGH EMBASSY IS CONVINCED THAT GOA IS NOT CONSIDERING ANY HOSTILE ACTION. IN PART, VIGNES STATEMENT MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO FLAP WHICH BREWED UP FOLLOWING GOA AMBASSADOR IN LONDON, ANCHORENA'S COMMENTS THAT VISITING ARGENTINE LEGISLATORS (UCR) SHOULD NOT COMMENT ON STATUS OF MALVINAS AS IT WAS "SUBJECT UNDER DISCUSSION BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS". THIS REMARK BY ANCHORENA RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE NEGATIVE PRESS COVERAGE CRITICIZING GOA FOR ATTEMPTING TO "CENSOR" ARGENTINE LEGISLATORS WHO WERE MERELY VOICING "CORRECT" AND POPULAR VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT. AFFAIR CULMINATED IN ANCHORENA CHALLENGING UCR SENATOR LUIS LEON TO A DUEL. ANCHORENA HAS BEEN CALLED BACK TO ARGENTINE FOR CONSULTATIONS AND PRESUMABLY WILL SAMPLE VIGNES' IRE FOR HIS IMPOLITIC CONDUCT.

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